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The Crazy American



Arthur Hoppe

WHAT SEEMS to be the trouble, Mrs. Haberdash?"

"It's my husband, Milton, here, Dr. Schrinck. He's nuttier than a fruitcake. He keeps saying these spies are out to get him."

"Spies? Spies for which government, Mrs. Haberdash?"

"Ours, Doctor. Can you imagine? Go ahead, Milton, tell him about how you think the government secretly spiked your coffee with LSD."

"Man, what a trip, Doctor!"

"Who in the government do you think did that to you, Mr. Haberdash?"

"I don't know, doctor. It was either the Army or the CIA. They said afterward they just did it for fun — you know, to see how I'd react."

"Just for fun! Hoo-boy, what a kook, doctor! So he decides to write a book about it. He claims that's how he got on their list."

"That's right, doctor. They've got a list, you know. Thousands of us are on it. They follow us around, take out pictures, tap our phones . . ."

"Who taps your phone, Mr. Haberdash?"

"I don't know. All of them, I guess. Once I called my dentist and I could hear five voices in the background arguing about which bug was whose. One of them sounded like Henry Kissinger."

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SEE WHAT I mean doctor? Crazier than a bedbug. He even thinks that's how he got fired from General Consolidated."

"That's true, doctor. One of them — it may have been the Coast Guard

or perhaps the Division of Non-Ferrous Metals — told my boss I was a security risk. Of course, my boss was out to get me anyway because I knew he was bribing governments around the world, including ours."

"See, doctor! A nice firm like General Consolidated, bribing people. What an idea! Then he claims they burglarized his office, his hotel room, his study and his locker at the bowling alley."

"Who do you think committed these burglaries, Mr. Haberdash?"

"I'm not sure, doctor. It could've been the IRS or maybe the White House. But I suspect the FBI, mainly because they got bonuses for being burglars. The old incentive system, you know."

"The FBI! Listen to that, doctor! Can you see Efrem Zimbalist Jr. as a second-story man? Everybody knows the FBI is dedicated to fighting crime, not committing it. Is he batty or is he not?"

"You're quite right, Mrs. Haberdash, that your husband exhibits a strong persecution complex which is the classic symptom of paranoia. Orderlies, bring in a straitjacket."

"Ahah, Milton! I always said you were a nut."

"Please don't struggle, Mrs. Haberdash. I'm sure you will enjoy your confinement in The Daisy Dell Happy Farm."

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ME, DOCTOR? But it's him that's a weird-o. I haven't got a drop of paranoia in my head."

"Exactly, Mrs. Haberdash. And any American who isn't paranoid these days is, ipso facto, crazy."